MARY MARIE

By Eleanor H. Porter

Illustrations by R. H. Livingstone

CHAPTER I.—Mary begins with Nurse Sarah's account of her (Mary's) birth, which seemingly interested her father, who is a famous astronomer, less than a new star which was discovered the same night. Her name is a compromise, her mother wanted to call her Viola and her father insisting on Abigail Jane. The child quickly learned that her home was in some way different from those of her small friends, and was puzzled thereat. Nurse Sarah tells her of her mother's arrival at Andersonville as a bride and how astonished they all were at the sight of the dainty eighteen-year old girl whom the sedate professor had chosen for a wife.

CHAPTER II.—Continuing her story, Nurse Sarah makes it plain why the household seemed a strange one to the child and howlher father and mother drifted apart through misunderstanding, each too proud to in any way attempt to smooth over the situation

CHAPTER III.—Mary tells of the time spent "out west" where the "perfectly all right and genteel and respectable" divorce was being arranged for, and her mother's (to her) unacountable behavior. By the court's decree the child is to spend six months of the year with her mother and six months with her father. Boston is Mother's home, and she and Mary leave Andersonville for that city to spend the first six months.

CHAPTER V.—At Andersonville Aunt Jane meets her at the station. Her father is away somewhere, studying an eclipse of the moon. Marie—"Mary" now—instinctively compares Aunt Jane, prim and severe, with her beautiful, dainty mother, much to the former's disadvantage. Aunt Jane disapproves of the dainty clothes which the child is wearing, and replaces them with "serviceable" serges and thick-coled shoes. Her father arrives home and seems surprised to see her. The child soon begins to notice that the girls at school seem to avoid her. Her father appears interested in the life Mrs. Anderson leads at Boston and asks many questions in a queer manner which puzzles Mary. She finds out that her schoolmates do not associate with her on account of her parents being divorced, and she refuses to attend school. Angry at first, Mr. Anderson, when he learns the reason for her determination, decides that she need not go. He will hear her lessons. In Aunt Jane's and her father's absence Mary dresses in the pretty clothes she brought from Boston and plays the liveliest tunes she knows, on the little-used piano. Then, overcome by her lonesomeness, she indulges in a crying spell which her father's unexpected appearance interrupts. She sobs out the story of her unhappiness, and in a clumsy way he comforts her. After that he appears to desire to make her stay more pleasant. Her mother writes asking that Mary be allowed to come to Boston for the beginning of the school term, and Mr. Anderson consents, though from an expression he lets fall Mary believes he is sorry she is going.

Mary before I go. Now, what do you think of that? And if I've got to be Mary there and Mary here, too, when can I ever be Marie? Oh, I know I said I'd be willing to be Mary half, and maybe more than half, the time. But when it comes to really being Mary out of turn extra time, that is quite another thing.

And I am Mary.

Listen:

I've learned to cook. That's Mary.

I've been studying astronomy. That's Mary.

I've learned to walk quietly, speak softly, laugh not too loudly, and be a lady at all times. That's Mary.

And now, to add to all this, Mother has had me dress like Mary. Yes, she began two weeks ago. She came into my room one morning and said she wanted to look over my dresses and things; and I could see, by the way she frowned and bit her lip and tapped her foot on the floor, that she wasn't suited. She said:

"I think, my dear, that on Saturday we'll have to go in town shopping. Quite a number of these things will not do at all."

And I was so happy! Visions of new dresses and hats and shoes rose before me, and even the pink beaded silk came into my mind—though I didn't really have much hopes of that.

Well, we went shopping on Saturday, but—did we get the pink silk? We did not. We did get—you'd never guess what. We got two new gingham dresses, very plain and homely, and a pair of horrid, thick, low shoes. Why, I could have cried! I did 'most cry as I exclaimed:

"Why Mother, those are Mary things!"

"Of course, they're Mary things," answered Mother, cheerfully. "That's what I meant to buy—Mary things, as you call them. Aren't you going to be Mary just next week? Of course, you are! And didn't you tell me last year, as soon as you got there, Miss Anderson objected to your clothing and bought new for you? Well, I am trying to see that she does not have to do that this year."

And then she bought me a brown serge suit and a hat so tiresomely sensible that even Aunt Jane would love them, I know. And tomorrow I've got to put them on to go in.

Do you wonder that I say I am Mary already?

CHAPTER VII

When I Am Neither One.

ANDERSONVILLE

Well, I came last night. I had on the brown suit and the sensible hat, and every turn of the wheels all day had been singing: "Mary, Mary, now you're Mary!" Why, Mother even called me Mary when she said good-by. She came to the junction with me just as she had before, and put me on the other train.

"Now, remember, dear, you're to try very hard to be a joy and a comfort to your father—just the little Mary that he wants you to be. Remember, he has been very kind to let you stay with me so long."

She cried when she kissed me just as she did before; but she didn't tell me this time to be sure and not love Father better than I did her. I noticed that. But, of course, I didn't say anything, though I might have told her easily that I knew nothing could ever make me love him better than I did her.

When we got to Andersonville, and the train rolled into the station, I stepped down from the cars and looked over to where the carriages were to find John and Aunt Jane. But they weren't there. There wasn't even the carriage there; and I can remember now just how my heart sort of felt sick inside of me when I thought that even Aunt Jane had forgotten, and that there wasn't anybody to meet me.

There was a beautiful big green automobile there, and I thought how I wished that had come to meet me; and I was just wondering what I should do, when all of a sudden somebody spoke my name. And who do you think it was? You'd never guess it in a month. It was Father. Yes, Father!

Why, I could have hugged him, I was so glad. But of course I didn't, right before all those people. But he was so tall and handsome and splendid, and I felt so proud to be walking along the platform with him and letting folks see that he'd come to meet me! But I couldn't say anything—not anything, the way I wanted to; and all I could do was to stammer out:

"Why, where's Aunt Jane?"

And that's just the thing I didn't want to say; and I knew it the minute I'd said it. Why, it sounded as if I missed Aunt Jane, and wanted her instead of him, when all the time I was so pleased and excited to see him that I could hardly speak.

He just kind of smiled, and looked queer, and said that Aunt Jane—er—couldn't come. Then I felt sorry; for I saw, of course, that that was why he had come; not because he wanted to, but because Aunt Jane couldn't, so he had to. And I could have cried, all the while he was fixing it up about my trunk.

He turned then and led the way straight over to where the carriages were, and the next minute there was John touching his cap to me; only it was a brand-new John looking too sweet for anything in a chauffeur's cap and uniform. And, what do you think? He was helping me into that beautiful big green car before I knew it.

"Why, Father, Father!" I cried. "You don't mean—" I just couldn't finish; but he finished for me.

"Like it!" I guess he didn't need to have me say any more. But I did say more. I just raved and raved over that car until Father's eyes crinkled all up in little smile wrinkles, and he said:

"I'm glad. I hoped you'd like it."

"I guess I do like it!" I cried. Then I went on to tell him how I thought it was the prettiest one I ever saw, and 'way ahead of even Mr. Easterbrook's.

"And, pray, who is Mr. Easterbrook?" asked Father then. "The violinist, perhaps—eh?"

Now, wasn't it funny he should have remembered that there was a violinist? But, of course, I told him no, it wasn't the violinist. It was another one that took Mother to ride, the one I told him about in the Christmas letter; and he was very rich, and had two perfectly beautiful cars; and I was going on to tell more—how he didn't take Mother now—but I didn't get a chance, for Father interrupted, and said, "Yes, yes, to be sure." And he showed he wasn't interested, for all the little smile wrinkles were gone, and he looked stern and dignified, more like he used to. And he went on to say that, as we had almost reached home, he had better explain right away that Aunt Jane was no longer living there; that his cousin from the West, Mrs. Whitney, was keeping house for him now. She was a very nice lady, and he hoped I would like her. And I might call her "Cousin Grace."

And before I could even draw breath to ask any questions, we were home; and a real pretty lady, with a light-blue dress on, was helping me out of the car, and kissing me as she did so.

Now, do you wonder that I have been rubbing my eyes and wondering if I was really I, and if this was Andersonville?

ONE WEEK LATER

It isn't a dream. It's all really, truly true—everything: Father coming to meet me, the lovely automobile, and the pretty lady in the light-blue dress, who kissed me. And when I went downstairs the next morning I found out it was real, 'specially the pretty lady; for she kissed me again, and said she hoped I'd be happy there. And she told me to amuse myself any way I liked, and said, if I wanted to, I might run over to see some of the girls, but not to make any plans for the afternoon, for she was going to take me to ride.

Now, what do you think of that? Go to see the girls in the morning, and take a ride—an automobile ride!—in the afternoon. In Andersonville! Why, I couldn't believe my ears. Of course, I was wild and crazy with delight—but it was all so different. Why, I began to think almost that I was Marie, and not Mary at all.

And it's been that way the whole week through. I've had a beautiful time. I've been so excited! And Mother is excited, too. Of course, I wrote her and told her all about it right away. And she wrote right back and wanted to know everything—everything I could tell her; all the little things. And she was so interested in Cousin Grace, and wanted to know all about her; said she never heard of her before, and was she Father's own cousin, and how old she was, and was she pretty, and was Father around the house more now, and did I see a lot of him? She thought from something I said that I did.

I've just been writing her again, and I could tell her more now, of course, than I could in that first letter. I've been here a whole week, and, of course, I know more about things, and have done more.

I told her that Cousin Grace wasn't really Father's cousin at all, so it

And She Is Pretty, and Everybody Loves Her.

wasn't any wonder she hadn't ever heard of her. She was the wife of Father's third cousin who went to South America six years ago and caught the fever and died there. So this Mrs. Whitney isn't really any relation of his at all. But he'd always known her, even before she married his cousin; and so, when her husband died, and she didn't have any home, he asked her to come here.

I don't know why Aunt Jane went away, but she's been gone 'most four months now, they say here. Nellie told me. Nellie is the maid—I mean hired girl—here now. (I will keep forgetting that I'm Mary now and must use the Mary words here.)

I told Mother that she (Cousin Grace) was quite old, but not so old as Aunt Jane. And she is pretty, and everybody loves her. I think even Father likes to have her around better than he did his own sister Jane, for he sometimes stays around quite a lot now—after meals, and in the evening, I mean. And that's what I told Mother. Of course, he still likes his stars the best of anything, but not quite as well as he used to, maybe—not to give all his time to them.

I forgot to say that Father is going to let me go back to school again this year ahead of his time, just as he did last year. So you see, really, I'm here only a little bit of a while, as it is now, and it's no wonder I keep forgetting I am Mary.

ONE WEEK LATER

Things are awfully funny here this time. I wonder if it's all Cousin Grace that makes it so. Anyhow, she's just as different as different can be from Aunt Jane. And things are different, everywhere.

Why, I forget half the time that I'm Mary. Honestly, I do. I try to be Mary. I try to move quietly, speak gently, and laugh softly, just as Mother told me to. But before I know it I'm acting natural again—just like Marie, you know.

And I believe it is Cousin Grace. She never looks at you in Aunt Jane's I'm-amazed-at-you way. And she laughs herself a lot, and sings and plays, too—real pretty lively things; not just hymn tunes. And the house is different. There are four geraniums in the dining room window, and the parlor is open every day. The wax flowers are there, but the hair wreath and the coffin plate are gone. Cousin Grace doesn't dress like Aunt Jane, either. She wears pretty white and blue dresses, and her hair is curly and fluffy.

I think all this is why I keep forgetting to be Mary. But, of course, I understand that Father expects me to be Mary, and so I try to remember.

TWO WEEKS LATER

I understand it all now—everything: why the house is different, and Father, and everything. And it is Cousin Grace, and it is a love story.

Father is in love with her.

Now I guess I shall have something for this book!

It seems funny now that I didn't think of it at first. But I didn't—not until I heard Nellie and her beau talking about it. Nellie said she wasn't the only one in the house that was going to get married. And when he asked her what she meant, she said it was Dr. Anderson and Mrs. Whitney. That anybody could see it that wasn't as blind as a bat.

My, but wasn't I excited? I just guesss I was. And, of course, I saw that I had been blind as a bat. But I began to open my eyes after that, and watch—not disagreeably, you know, but just glad and interested, and on account of the book.

And I saw:

That Father stayed in the house a lot more than he used to.

That he smiled more.

That he actually asked Cousin Grace and me to play for him several times.

That he went with us to the Sunday school picnic. (I never saw Father at a picnic before, and I don't believe he ever saw himself at one.)

That—oh, I don't know, but a whole lot of little things that I can't remember; but they were all unmistakable, very unmistakable. And I wondered, when I saw it all, that I had been as blind as a bat before.

When I wrote Mother I told her all about it—the signs and symptoms, I mean, and how different and thawed-out Father was; and I asked if she didn't think it was so, too. But she didn't answer that part. She didn't write much, anyway. It was an awfully snippy letter; but she said she had a headache and didn't feel at all well. So that was the reason, probably, why she didn't say more—about Father's love affair, I mean. She only said she was glad, she was sure, if Father had found an estimable woman to make a home for him, and she hoped they'd be happy. Then she went on talking about something else. And she didn't write much more, anyway, about anything.

AUGUST

Well, of all the topsy-turvy worlds, this is the topsy-turviest, I am sure. What do they want me to do, and which do they want me to be? Oh, I wish I was just a plain Susie or Bessie, and not a cross-current and a contradiction, with a father that wants me to be one thing and a mother that wants me to be another! It was bad enough before, when Father wanted me to be Mary, and Mother wanted me to be Marie. But now—

Well, to begin at the beginning.

It's all over—the love story, I mean, and I know now why it's been so hard for me to remember to be Mary and why everything is different, and all.

They don't want me to be Mary.

They want me to be Marie.

And now I don't know what to think. If Mother's going to want me to be Mary, and Father's going to want me to be Marie, how am I going to know what anybody wants, ever? Besides, it was getting to be such a beautiful love story—Father and Cousin Grace. And now—

But let me tell you what happened.

It was last night. We were on the piazza. Father, Cousin Grace, and I. She got up and went into the house for something—Cousin Grace, I mean—and all of a sudden I determined to tell Father how glad I was, about him and Cousin Grace; and how I hoped it would last—having him out there with us, and all that. And I told him.

I don't remember what I said exactly. But I hadn't anywhere near said what I wanted to when he did stop me. Why, he almost jumped out of his chair.

"Mary!" he gasped. "What in the world are you talking about?"

"Why, Father, I was telling you," I explained. And I tried to be so cool and calm that it would make him calm and cool, too. (But it didn't calm him or cool him one bit.) "It's about when you're married and—"

"Married!" he interrupted again. (They never let me interrupt like that!)

"To Cousin Grace—yes. But Father, you—you are going to marry Cousin Grace, aren't you?" I cried—and I did 'most cry, for I saw by his face that he was not.

"That is not my present intention," he said. His lips came together hard, and he looked over his shoulder to see if Cousin Grace was coming back.

"But you're going to some time," I begged him.

"I do not expect to."

I fell back in my chair, and I know I looked grieved and hurt and disappointed, as I almost sobbed:

"Oh, Father, and when I thought you were going to!"

"There, there, child! He spoke, stern and almost cross now. "This absurd nonsensical idea has gone quite far enough. Let us think no more about it."

"It isn't absurd and nonsensical!" I cried. And I could hardly say the words, I was choking up so. "Everybody said you were going to, and I wrote Mother so; and—"

"You wrote that to your mother?" He did jump from his chair this time.

"Yes; and she was glad."

"Oh, she was!" He sat down sort of limp-like and queer.

"Yes. She said she was glad you'd found an estimable woman to make a home for you."

"Oh, she did." He said this, too, in that queer, funny, quiet kind of way.

"Yes," I spoke, decided and firm. I'd begun to think, all of a sudden, that maybe he didn't appreciate Mother as much as she did him; and I determined right then and there to make him, if I could. When I remember all the lovely things she'd said about him—

"Father," I began; and I spoke this time, even more decided and firm. "I don't believe you appreciate Mother."

"Eh, What?"

He made me jump this time, he turned around with such a jerk, and spoke so sharply. But in spite of the jump I still held on to my subject, firm and decided.

"I say I don't believe you appreciate my mother. You acted right now as if you didn't believe she meant it when I told you she was glad you had found an estimable woman to make a home for you. But she did mean it. I know, because she said it before, once, last year, that she hoped you would find one. Yes, and that isn't all. There's another reason why I know Mother always has—has your best interest at heart. She—she tried to make me over into Mary before I came, so as to please you."

"She did what?" Once more he made me jump, he turned so suddenly, and spoke with such a short, sharp snap.

But in spite of the jump I went right on, just as I had before, firm and decided. I told him everything—all about the cooking lessons, and the astronomy book we read an hour every day, and the pink silk dress I couldn't have, and the self-discipline. And how she said if she'd had self-discipline when she was a girl, her life would have been very different.

I talked very fast and hurriedly. I was afraid he'd interrupt, and I wanted to get in all I could before he did. But he didn't interrupt at all. He

"And So You Came as Mary?"

did not even stir until I said how at the last she bought me the homely shoes and the plain dark suit so I could go as Mary, and be Mary when Aunt Jane first saw me get off the train.

When I said that, he dropped his hand and turned around and stared at me. And there was such a funny look in his eyes. Then he got up and began to walk up and down the piazza, muttering: "So you came as Mary, you came as Mary." Then, after a minute, he gave a funny little laugh and sat down.

Mrs. Small came up the front walk then to see Cousin Grace, and Father told her to go right into the library where Cousin Grace was. So we were left alone again, after a minute.

It was 'most dark on the piazza, but I could see Father's face in the light from the window; and it looked—well, I'd never seen it look like that before. It was as if something that had been on it for years had dropped off and left it clear where before it had been blurred and indistinct. No, that doesn't exactly describe it either. I can't describe it. But I'll go on and say what he said.

After Mrs. Small had gone into the house, and he saw that she was sitting down with Cousin Grace in the library, he turned to me and said:

"And so you came as Mary?"

I said yes, I did.

"Well, I—I got ready for Marie."

But then I didn't quite understand, not even when I looked at him and saw the old understanding twinkle in his eyes.

"You mean—you thought I was coming as Marie, of course," I said then.

"Yes," he nodded.

"But I came as Mary."

"I see now that you did. Well, Mary, you've told me your story, so I suppose I may as well tell you mine—now. You see, I not only got ready for Marie, but I had planned to keep her Marie, and not let her be Mary—at all."

And then he told me. He told me how he'd never forgotten that day in the parlor when I cried and he saw then how hard it was for me to live here, with him so absorbed in his work and Aunt Jane so stern in her black dress. And he said I put it very vividly when I talked about being Marie in Boston, and Mary here, and he saw just how it was. And so he thought and thought about it all winter, and wondered what he could do. And after a time it came to him—he'd let me be Marie here; that is, he'd try to make it so I could be Marie. And he was just wondering how he was going to get Aunt Jane to help him when she was sent for and asked to go to an old friend who was sick. And he told her to go, by all means to go. Then he got Cousin Grace to come here. He said he knew Cousin Grace, and he was sure she would know how to help him to let me stay Marie. So he talked it over with her—how they would let me laugh, and sing and play the piano all I wanted to, and wear the clothes I brought with me, and be just as near as I could be the way I was in Boston.

"And to think after all my preparation for Marie, you should be Mary already, when you came," he finished.

Father had covered his eyes with his hand, as if thinking and thinking, just as hard as he could. And I suppose it did seem queer to him, that he should be trying to make me Marie, and all the while Mother was trying to make me Mary. And it seemed so to me, as I began to think it over.

"And so your mother—did that," Father muttered; and there was the queer little catch in his breath again.

He didn't say any more, not a single word. And after a minute he got up and went into the house. But he didn't go into the library where Mrs. Small and Cousin Grace were talking. He went straight upstairs to his own room and shut the door. I heard it. And he was still there when I went up to bed afterward.

How do you suppose Mother's going to feel when I tell her that after all her pains Father didn't like it at all. He wanted me to be Marie. It's a shame, after all the pains she took. But I won't write it to her, anyway. Maybe I won't have to tell her, unless she asks me.

But I know it. And, pray, what am I to do? Of course, I can act like Marie here all right, if that is what folks want. But I can't wear Marie, for I haven't a single Marie thing here. They're all Mary. That's all I brought.

Oh, dear suz me! Why couldn't Father and Mother have been just the common live-happy-ever-after kind, or else found out before they married that they were unlikes?

SEPTEMBER

Well, vacation is over, and I go back to Boston tomorrow. It's been very nice and I've had a good time, in spite of being so mixed up as to whether I was Mary or Marie. It wasn't so bad as I was afraid it would be. Very soon after Father and I had that talk on the piazza, Cousin Grace took me down to the store and bought me two new white dresses, and the dearest little pair of shoes I ever saw. She said Father wanted me to have them.

And that's all—every single word that's been said about that Mary-and-Marie business. And even that didn't really say anything—not by name. And Cousin Grace never mentioned it again. And Father never mentioned it at all. Not a word.

Father's been queer. He's been awfully queer. Some days he's talked a lot with me—asked me questions just as he used to, all about what I did in Boston, and Mother, and the people that came there to see her, and everything. And he spoke of the violinist again, and, of course this time I told him all about him, and that he didn't come any more, nor Mr. Easterbrook, either; and Father was so interested! Why, it seemed sometimes as if he just couldn't hear enough about things. Then, all of a sudden, at times, he'd get right up in the middle of something I was saying and act as if he was just waiting for me to finish my sentence so he could go. And he did go, just as soon as I had finished my sentence. And after that, maybe, he wouldn't hardly speak to me again for a whole day.

And so that's why I say he's been so queer since that night on the piazza. But most of the time he's been lovely, perfectly lovely. And so has Cousin Grace. And I've had a beautiful time.

(To Be Continued)